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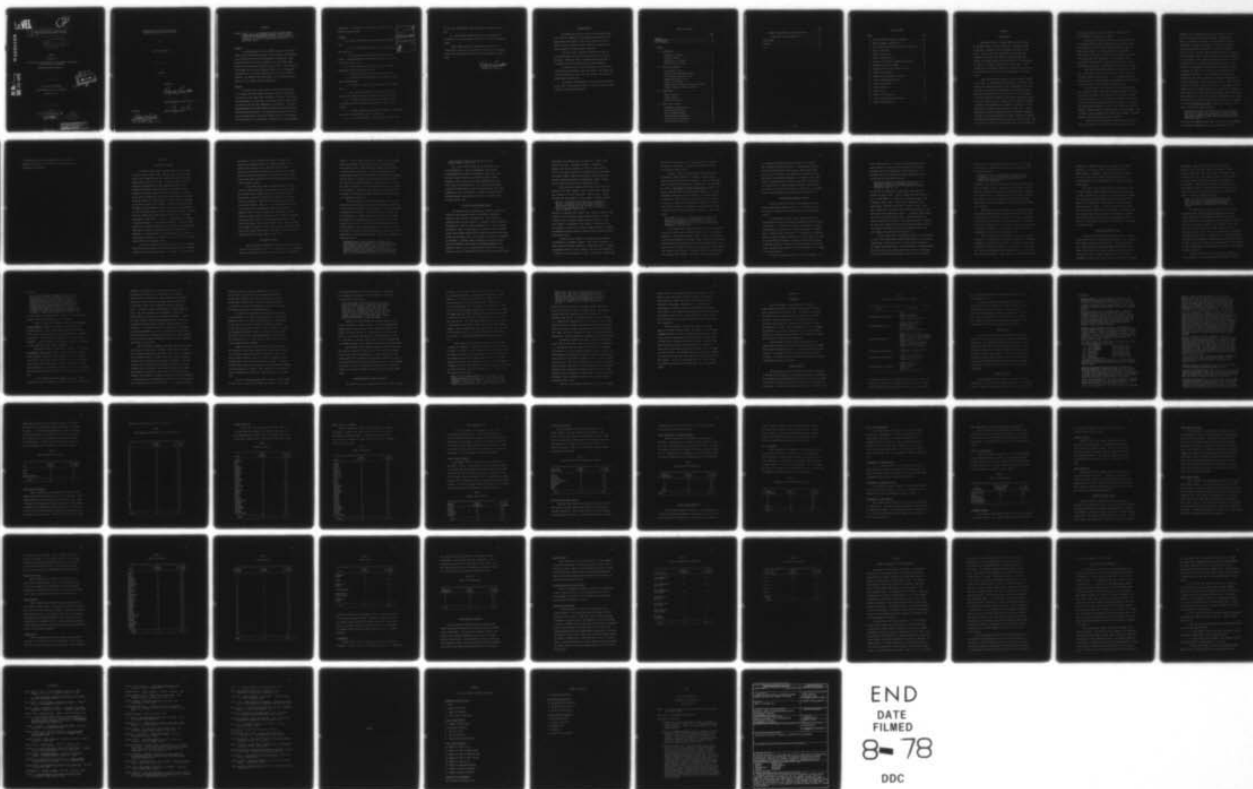
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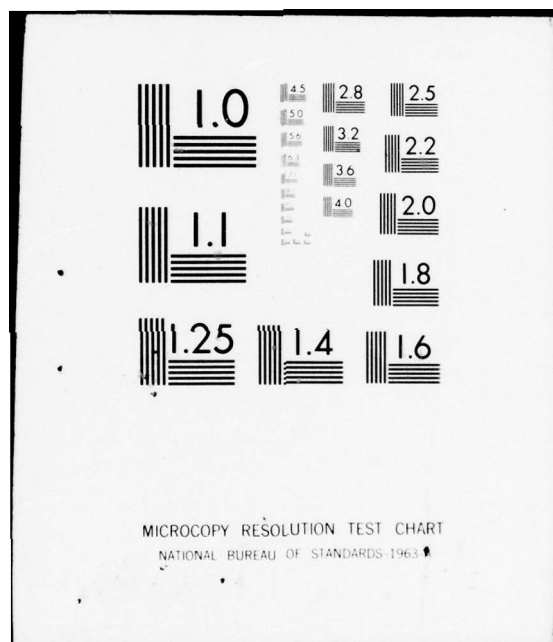
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WOMEN CONVICTED OF MURDER IN TEXAS.

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A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the Institute of Contemporary Corrections  
and the Behavioral Sciences

Sam Houston State University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

by

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Jesse Lee Johnson, Jr.

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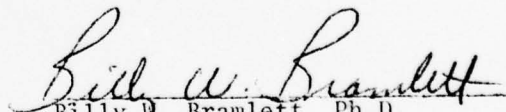
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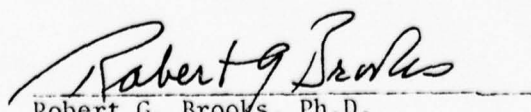
A THESIS


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## ABSTRACT

Johnson, Jesse L., Jr. A Descriptive Profile of Seventy-Three Females Convicted of Murder in Texas. Master of Arts (Institute of Contemporary Corrections and the Behavioral Sciences), May, 1978, Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, Texas.

### Purpose

It was the purpose of this study<sup>is</sup> to provide a descriptive profile of the violent-prone female inmates currently incarcerated in the Goree Unit of the Texas Department of Corrections, after being convicted of the crime of murder. This description<sup>is</sup> will be made by analyzing the variables chosen to study. These variables are divided into six major categories which are: (1) demographic characteristics; (2) social characteristics; (3) prior criminal behavior; (4) education and intelligence; (5) institutional information; and (6) current offense information. ↑

### Methods

The method used in this study to obtain the information was to gather from each inmate's personal folder the information in relation to the twenty-seven variables to be used in this study. This information, in the folder, is obtained for each inmate as she is processed into the Texas Department of Corrections. The information gathered on the twenty-seven variables was divided into one of the following six areas: (1) demographic characteristics; (2) social characteristics; (3) prior criminal behavior; (4) education and intelligence; (5) institutional information; (6) current offense

information. From these data, a descriptive profile of the inmates studied was made.

### Findings

The profile of the female convicted of murder showed that:

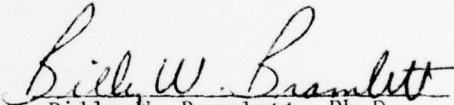
1. She was a white female who was 27.5 years of age when convicted.
2. She had almost an equal chance of being born in either a Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area or a rural area of Texas or out of state.
3. She was residing in and convicted in a Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area of Texas.
4. She most likely had at some time been married.
5. Her religious affiliation was most probably with the Baptist denomination.
6. She had not served in the Armed Forces of the United States.
7. The subject had probably never before been in jail, reform school, detention homes, prison or placed on probation.
8. She had not completed junior high school, but her intelligence level was slightly higher than the other female inmates.
9. The mean sentence for the inmates studied was twenty-two years for the conviction of the crime of murder.
10. She, more than likely, acted alone in the commission

ACCESSION for	
NTIS	White Section <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
DDC	Buff Section <input type="checkbox"/>
UNANNOUNCED	<input type="checkbox"/>
JUSTIFICATION	
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of her crime, and presently does not have any detainers against her.

11. She had been classified by the Texas Department of Corrections as a first offender, and also as a first class medical inmate.

These findings provide a descriptive profile of the violent-prone female who was convicted of murder and was currently serving time at the Goree Unit of the Texas Department of Corrections.

  
Billy W. Bramlett, Ph.D.  
Supervising Professor

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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To my wife, Sarai, and sons, Ryan and Brad, must go special recognition for their part in helping me to complete this work. Without my family's support and encouragement, it is doubtful if this work would have ever been attempted.

I would also like to thank my parents who provided the early training and motivation for this author. The example set by them has been, and always will be, a reminder of what can be accomplished with hard work.

And finally, acknowledgement must be made to the United States Army, who allowed this author to pursue his education and improve his professional knowledge.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, different theorists have searched for possible causes for man's criminality. Researchers have, by and large, centered on the male members of society and his crimes. The area of female criminality has received scant attention, with little real empirical research being done. Instead, the female criminal has been viewed as a "fallen woman" or "errant" girl having strayed from the right path. If the criminality of the female offender has received scant attention, the research done in the area on violent females is even more scarce.

There have been many reasons for this consistent neglect by researchers in studying the female offender. The first, and probably most important reason, is that women comprise less than 5 percent of the entire prison population in the United States. Women are not arrested even as often as men; in 1972, according to the FBI Uniform Crime Reports, male arrests outnumbered female arrests by about six to one. Because of their relative smallness in numbers, women offenders are frequently considered to be mere abstractions in general data collecting (Rasche, 1975). Small populations of female offenders mean that researchers interested in them will have fewer subjects for study, complicating findings and lowering the generalizability of the data. Often, factors such as age or social status of the offenders have to be overlooked due



to the small number of subjects included in studies done in vastly different settings (Smith, 1962).

Inquiries into the case histories and other particulars of imprisoned women are more frequently opposed by both correctional officials and the inmates themselves than are those of males (Smith, 1962). It would seem that the correctional officials and the inmates involved are more protective of themselves than their male counterparts. This could well be an extension of the historically protective nature of our society toward women in general, a phenomenon which may well be changing.

Blos (1969) put forth an additional explanation for the lack of research. He concluded that because of the relatively victimless nature of women crimes, i.e., shoplifting and prostitution, society is more concerned with attempting to find solutions to causes of more violent behavior exhibited by males.

The last reason given for the lack of research concerns the viewing of earlier researchers that women themselves were not fit subjects for study. Only within the last fifteen to twenty years has research been done on the female offender, and the bulk of that research has been done by female researchers. There have been some notable exceptions to this trend with the works done by Lombroso, Pollak, Ward and Kassebaum being excellent examples. But, in general, male researchers have studied male offenders, and until recently, there have been few female researchers.

Because of the small amount of research completed in the field, with much of it being buried in larger studies of male

offenders, the individual layman has been forced to rely on the mass media for his or her information. Unfortunately, there is a tendency in the media, in the absence of factual information, to report sensationalism. Women in prison have been portrayed either as tigeresses, wild and passionately possessed, or as virtually innocent victims of cruel and sadistic keepers (Rasche, 1974). Women's institutions are often portrayed as exact replicas of the worst male prisons with tiers of cells and lockstep rules, or dungeon-like corridors of cages. This tendency to over-emphasize certain aspects of prison life tends to portray the female in ways which she is portrayed in some pornographic literature. This distorted view of the female offender has been carried further by the media in describing the violent-prone female. She has been portrayed as a woman forced to commit her crime out of love or greed with a great amount of forethought--stories of women putting poison in candy in an attempt to murder their lover's wife and then returning the candy to the store where children ate it and died, make easy reading but hardly a pure description of the offender involved (Gribble, 1969). Mr. Gribble, in his book Such Women are Deadly, describes the women he wrote about as killing for various reasons:

Some killed for gain, some for hate, some for the temporary satiation of a blood lust, some even in a twisted way for love. But all found a common sisterhood in their deliberate employment of destructive force and all achieved dark fame after their death.

This type of information hardly adds to the public's understanding of the female offender nor does it accurately describe this

violent-prone offender.

#### Statement of Problem

The fact that there has been little research on the violent female offender offers the best explanation as to why additional research is necessary. There remains a multitude of questions which need to be answered.

#### Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to provide a descriptive profile of the violent-prone female inmates currently incarcerated in the Texas Department of Corrections at the Goree Unit convicted of the crime of homicide. This description will be made by analyzing the variables chosen to study. These variables are divided into six major categories which are: (1) Demographic characteristics, (2) Social characteristics, (3) Prior criminal behavior, (4) Education and intelligence, (5) Institutional information, and (6) Current offense information. A complete listing of the variables which will be analyzed is contained in Appendix A.

#### Questions to be Answered

Some of the questions which this study will address are:

1. What are the demographic characteristics of the "typical" woman who was convicted of murder?
2. What are the social characteristics of the convicted

homicide offender?

3. Does the prior criminal behavior of the females studied give any indication of their inclination to commit the crime of murder?

4. What is the education and intelligence levels of the females studied?

5. Do the females studied differ in the classification categories from other inmates?

6. What is the current offense information and how does it describe the "typical" murderess?

#### Limitations of the Study

This study is limited in scope to only describing those inmates currently confined in the Goree Unit of the Texas Department of Corrections after being convicted of the crime of murder. The results and findings cannot be used to draw generalizations about female offenders within this prison or other prison settings, since the findings would not be representative of the entire population of female offenders.

Within the confines of this study, it was not possible to include any other inmates who may have murdered someone but were convicted of a lesser offense. The available information at the Texas Department of Corrections does not indicate what sort of plea bargaining may have taken place in the county of conviction. That this possibility exists cannot be overlooked, since it could have affected the overall description of the inmates. However,

it was decided that the only manageable way of selecting subjects to be studied, was to take only those who had been convicted of the offense.



## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Criminality among women is on the increase and has been for several years (Simon, 1975). One only needs to look at the arrest trends compiled by the FBI Uniform Crime Report (1976) to become acutely aware of this fact. In looking at the total percentage of increased arrest rates between 1967-1976, it was discovered that females had an overall 64.3 percent increase, compared to the males increase of only 14.8 percent. If this is broken down to include only the "major crimes" defined by the FBI, the female arrest rate increased 140.5 percent from 1967 compared to the male increase of 53.9 percent. This increased arrest rate for women can be explained in at least two ways. One explanation is that the Criminal Justice System is doing away with the "chivalry" factor for women and treating women the same as men. The other explanation is that there is, in fact, a marked increase by women to commit criminal acts. Whichever explanation is accepted by the reader could be debated both pro and con, but the fact remains that while males continue to commit the greater absolute number of offenses, it is the women who are committing those same crimes at yearly rates of increase, now running as high as six and seven times faster than the males (Adler, 1971).

It also was found that if adult arrest records say anything about the present trends, the crime rate for persons under eighteen probably says more about the women of the future. From 1967-1976,

according to the FBI Uniform Crime Reports, the number of females under eighteen arrested for robbery jumped by 250.8 percent, while the male arrest rate rose 104.7 percent. Realizing the problems of using arrest records as a valid indicator of crimes being committed, it still appears that in the future, more women criminals will be officially involved in the Criminal Justice System.

In reviewing the history of research focusing on the studies of female offenders, there appears to be several somewhat separate stages through which the research has passed. These stages are closely aligned to the phases of the general study of criminology. There are five identifiable stages of this form of research. They are: (1) the prescientific stage, (2) the search for constitutional causes which reflected a beginning interest in the criminal as an individual, (3) the search for factors which cause crime to be of both constitutional and environmental factors, (4) the numbers and offenses stage, and (5) the women's prison stage (Rasche, 1975). After reviewing this research, attention will be given to studies conducted in the area of the violent-prone female. And finally, this review will indicate where the current emphasis seems to be.

#### Prescientific Stage

The first stage of research has been and currently is being called the prescientific stage, and it encompasses almost everything written on the subject of crime up to the start of the twentieth

century. As far as women offenders are concerned, this includes practically nothing. Women then, as now, constituted such a small portion of the recognized deviant element that little was set forth on them specifically. The few references made concerning women showed clearly that women were generally considered morally corrupt (as opposed to evil) when they transgressed the law, but were not taken seriously as a danger to society. Very few women were labeled as "evil," but when they were, it was done with a vengeance. These women were portrayed as supernatural, or as witches, and therefore no longer deserved the protection normally extended towards women.

This prescientific stage of criminology was essentially devoted to moral-ethical theorizing, which eventually resulted in the development and growth of the penitentiary system in the early nineteenth-century America. The penitentiary was a product of the development of a causal theory of crime which had a corrupt environment and lax upbringing as the root causes of criminal behavior (Rasche, 1975). One of the earliest references to the female offender in this theory came from Dr. Griscom in 1823. In his Report of the Society for the Prevention of Pauperism, he was arguing for a proposed house of refuge. One of the categories he cited was that of:

delinquent females, who are either too young to have acquired habits of fixed depravity, or those whose lives have in general been virtuous, but who having yielded to the seductive influences of corrupt associates, have suddenly to endure the bitterness of lost reputation, and are cast forlorn and destitute upon a cold and unfeeling public, full of compunction for their errors, and anxious



to be restored to the paths of innocence and usefulness [Rasche, 1975, p. 16].

This sort of causal theory may be classified as one of environmentalism. When the penitentiary idea failed, environmentalism was seriously threatened. One of the chief concerns of penal theorists was for the habitual criminal offenders, since recidivists destroyed completely the underlying theory for penitentiaries. That some men would choose to pursue criminal behavior, when any "rational man" would have abandoned it, led to an interest in trying to pinpoint constitutional features which might give clarity to why the choice was made (Rasche, 1975).

#### Search for Constitutional Causes

The second stage of criminological research involved the search for constitutional causes and reflected a beginning interest in the criminal as an individual. This interest was roughly divided into two categories: interest in (1) physiological characteristics, and (2) mental characteristics. It was the hope of theorists, that if large numbers of criminals could be studied, certain identifiable characteristics might emerge which would allow society to distinguish the "real criminals" from those who offended "by accident." The most famous criminology researcher of this period was Lombroso, whose study of The Female Offender first appeared in 1893. He sought physiological characteristics and followed a school of thought which involved taking elaborate cranial

measurements and studying physical anomalies to identify the person as criminal. The female criminals, according to Lombroso, did not have anomalies as often as male criminals. In fact, the women criminals were not physically very different from "moral" women, except for prostitutes, who did show more physical abnormalities than the nonprostitute female criminal, and who lacked the "mother sense" (Lombroso, 1920).

After much work, Lombroso was forced to admit that his concept of the "born criminal," which he developed by studying male offenders, was rare among women. However, when a female did fall into the category of "born criminal," Lombroso stated:

Rarely is a woman wicked but when she is she surpasses the man. The cruelty of the born female criminal is more refined and devilish, and she seeks "the full taste of death" in killing her enemy ... she is, in short, a monster [Lombroso, 1920, p. 152].

Moreover, the female "born criminal" was a double exception, since criminals were an exception among civilized people, and women criminals were an exception among criminals (Lombroso, 1920). That Lombroso is remembered for his unproven assumption is too bad, perhaps at least for the study of female offenders, he should be remembered for his attempt to show that female deviancy differs from male deviancy.

Lombroso was not alone in his search for physiological characteristics of female criminals. Most notably, Matthews, in 1923, studied the female criminal by viewing the physical size and development; Burtin, in 1925, looked at the sexual development of "criminal" women; and Seagrave, in 1926, analyzed the illnesses and

diseases of criminal women. All three persons were searching for causes of criminality in women but few definite factors were discovered (Smith, 1962).

Meanwhile, other researchers were studying the mental attributes of female offenders in attempts to connect delinquency with mental aberrations or diseases. The best study took place at Bedford Hills Reformatory by Weidensall. She published her report on The Mentality of the Criminal Woman in 1916. In general, she found that the criminal woman tended to be slow to comprehend instructions and thus tended to act blindly without comprehension. With training, many women were able to learn to be efficient at their work; consequently, Weidensall concluded that when this training was undertaken, then the problem of how to deal with the criminal woman would be solved. In short, she stated:

The results are of prime importance both to workers with mental tests and to practical penologists who seek to individualize punishment in such a manner as to meet the needs of the offender as well as the needs of the offense [Weidensall, 1916, Preface].

The findings that a large proportion of the female criminals confined in institutions were mentally deficient was supported by Spaulding in 1923 and the Gluecks in 1939. However, it soon became clear that the subnormal intelligence found in these studies were not actually related to criminality, but to institutionalization. As a result of this finding, the studies of constitutional factors became more cautious over the years. Fernald in 1920, for example, found two influences which seemed to be related to female delinquency:

poor economic background and lack of education or training; and "a somewhat inferior mentality." Fernald warned that these conclusions had not been tested against a general population, and so it was not known to what degree that it occurred within the general non-delinquent population. In further stating their findings, Fernald and her associates stated that no one factor was responsible for a person becoming delinquent, but rather it was likely to be a massing of factors in such a way as to disturb a more or less unstable initial adjustment (Fernald, 1920).

#### A Multicausal Approach to Crime

Fernald's study (1920) was the forerunner of the third stage in the study of female criminals. By the 1930's, crime was seen as a product of both constitutional and environmental factors.

In nonscientific circles, one of the most discussed environmental factors was the sexual freedom that women had found in World War I. In 1931, Cecil Bishop, a Scotland Yard veteran, observed that the crime rate was "appreciably higher" in England than it had been prior to World War I. According to his interpretations, women were largely responsible for this increase in crime. He saw the woman's movement as resulting in more women becoming "criminally minded," a "better class" woman turning criminal more often, and women being involved in sexual misdemeanors at a younger age than ever before.

During this period the work of Freud also appeared. His

work is offered here, not as much for dealing with the multi-causal approach to crime, but for explaining the context of how women were to be looked upon in the coming years. The Freudian theory of the position of women incorporates psychological and social-structural factors.

Freud viewed women as anatomically inferior--they are destined to become wives and mothers and this is admittedly an inferior destiny as benefits the inferior sex [Crites, 1976, p. 17].

The root of the inferiority is that women's sex organs are inferior to those of men. The girl assumes that she had lost a penis as punishment, is traumatized, and grows up envious and revengeful (Freud, 1932). Within Freud's framework, then a woman becomes "deviant" because she is striving to be a "man." She is aggressively rebellious and her drive to accomplish is the expression of her longing for a penis ... a hopeless pursuit that only leads to neurosis (Freud, 1933). Freud's explanation of female criminality, biased as it was, contributed much to stemming the tide of the feminist evolution which Bishop alluded to in the early 1900's and Freud's work strongly influenced writers and policy-makers from then until the present day.

By far, one of the most interesting studies from this period was that of the Dutch lawyer, Eugenia Lekkerkerker, who visited the United States in the late 1920's to study female reformatories. Her report, published in 1931, traced the growth of separate reformatories for women, gave lengthy descriptions of those institutions which she visited and their programs, and made some interesting



observations. She reported that about half of all women committed to prisons or reformatories in the first six months of 1923 had been convicted of:

prostitution, fornication, adultery, disorderly conduct or vagrancy; i.e., sex offenses which in Holland would either not be punished at all, or would rarely be punished with imprisonment.

Furthermore, she observed that the United States tended to merge legal and medical concerns, sending to the reformatories not all women who violated sexual codes but particularly those suffering from venereal disease. Discharge from some institutions hinged on being "cured." She also pointed out that actions being taken against women were not paralleled by similar actions against men in sex offenses.

Lekkerkerker was also among the first to note that women offenders were often handled by "noncriminal methods" and either granted probation, dismissed, or turned over to private agencies, or given supervision without any formal conviction. She saw two factors accounting for this: (1) the fact that officials hesitated to send minor offenders to the reformatory, and (2) that sexual delinquency was not seriously considered a crime.

While the work done by Lekkerkerker appears to have been worthwhile, it has received less attention compared to a study done by Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck in 1934. The Gluecks advanced the multicausal and empirical approaches in criminology. They studied over 500 convicted women and also conducted follow-up studies for years after their release. Their conclusions indicated that mental

inferiority, economic hardship, lack of education, and family instability, all played a part in setting the stage for a woman to behave criminally. Faced with the fact that prisons were full of this type of woman, they went on to assert, it was amazing that even a small proportion of them were actually rehabilitated.

The Gluecks also predicted that the "unfortunate social heritage" of these criminal women would probably be handed down to a new generation, for a majority of the subjects had children, both legitimate and illegitimate, and almost 80 percent of the mothers were indifferent, if not hostile, to their offspring (Glueck and Glueck, 1934). During a five year follow-up study, most of the women seemed to do a little better. The Gluecks did not attribute this to the institution or the parole system but they concluded that the reform was more contingent on the "disposition of the offender to reform," an idea which is still being talked about today.

#### Numbers and Offenses Stage

Having established that the approach to crime causation should be multicausal, criminological researchers began inspecting more closely various aspects or factors of female criminality. Thus, the fourth stage, called the numbers and offenses stage, began. More small scale studies were devoted to reporting and analyzing the types of crimes committed by women, as well as attempting to explain why significantly fewer women were criminally

adjudicated. Researchers became interested in trying to explain certain variations between the patterns of female and male criminality, such as age of peak criminality, types of crimes, and so on. For example, Cassity in 1941 asserted that age of peak criminality was related to psychological developments. "Male incidence of felony crimes reaches its peak between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five, female criminality was found to peak much later, from ages twenty-six to thirty." Cassity's explanation was that

woman is in her full bloom of attractiveness in her early 20's, and as a consequence during those years, she is least beset by the emotional frustrations which she begins to experience after 25 [Rasche, 1975, p. 23].

The fourth stage of research culminated in 1950 with the publication of The Criminality of Women by Otto Pollak. Pollak asserted that the difference in number of males and females involved in criminal behavior was not as great as official statistics would seem to indicate. The disparity may be attributed to the "masked" quality of women's crimes, which is a function of woman's role in society, the psychological components of femaleness, and certain physical factors. He further asserted that the many misconceptions concerning female criminality were due, in part, to man's sheer inability to understand woman, and, in part to man's self-deception regarding woman because of an unwillingness to grant her equality.

Pollak's work provoked a new and special attention to female offenders. The social role and social status of female



offenders began to be taken into consideration in attempts to analyze the differences between male and female crimes. This also lead researchers in the 1960's to question the social system of females in reformatories and prisons.

#### Women's Prison Stage

The type of work provoked by Pollak lead to the fifth stage of research called the women's prison stage. Women's prisons had in many ways been more progressive and innovative than had those for men. Some examples are: they were the first to be operated on the "open system" (no high walls surrounding them and greater interaction with the outside community); they were the first to develop real classification methods and treatment programs which were individually oriented; they were among the first to reduce idleness through extensive work and training programs; they sought to provide not only basic academic and vocational education, but "social education" as well; and they were the first to operate so-called "day parole" (American Prison Association, 1954).

However, until the 1960's, no significant research had been done regarding the internal structure of women's prisons. Ward and Kassebaum's Women's Prison: Sex and Social Structure (1965) and Giallombardo's Society of Women (1966) were the first significant American studies to be done. Ward and Kassebaum found that segregation from the family was the most severe deprivation for women in prison, while Giallombardo observed that lack of heterosexual relations

was a particular hardship. Both studies found that voluntary homosexuality served to soothe both of these deprivations. Their findings point to a vast difference between the social structure in women's prisons and that found in male prisons, where homosexuality is generally a brutalizing factor in the experience of inmates. Bell, in his book Social Deviance (1971), states that women are rarely forced into homosexual relationships. It forms more from an attempt to adapt to prison life and aid the female inmate to have a "family" while in prison. This separation from family is often severe and most disturbing to the woman in prison.

#### Studies on the Violent-Prone Female Offender

Studies focusing on the violent female offender are generally of two types. One type is where research has been done on violence and usually a portion of the study will mention the violent female offender. The other type of work deals more with describing sensational murders in which the women were the offenders and are reported in a style much like mystery novels.

The study done by Pollak in 1950 called The Criminality of Women, devotes one chapter to crimes against the person of which four pages address homicide by females. This section essentially deals with women using poison as their favorite "weapon." Other attention is given to the violent-prone female throughout his book, but little description of the characteristics of the violent female is revealed. In his findings for all female offenders studied, he

states that:

age is a factor, women committing crimes at a later age than men; more women criminals are married than male criminals; the criminal liability of women working in domestic service seems to be relatively high and women working in factories relatively low; intelligence tests revealed that mental defectiveness is more pronounced among certain types of female offenders than among others, especially when comparing prostitutes to other female inmates; and Negroes have a higher criminality than whites [Pollak, 1950, p. 118].

His study marked a beginning for the study of the violent female offender, for others interested in this research.

In 1960, Bensing and Schroeder, in their book Homicide in an Urban Community, devoted a chapter to females accused of felonious homicide. Their study included only the conviction rates, charges of which they were convicted and the number placed on probation. These factors were compared to the race of the defendants. Again, the black race was overrepresented in comparison to their population in the general community.

John McDonald discusses the "female murderers" in his book The Murderer and His Victim (1961). His findings indicate that female offenders usually kill their husbands, lovers or children, and that the black female homicide offender rate in Philadelphia is nearly twenty-three times greater than the rate for white female homicide offenders. In choosing the weapon to use for the homicide, McDonald stated that women use knives and icepicks rather than firearms.

In 1969, Wolfgang published Studies in Homicide, which attempted to provide sociological research on variables of homicide

offenders. He found that if age and sex in general are associated with aggression, then homicide was an explicit behavioral form of aggression. Males predominate in homicide statistics, probably because the female homicide percentage is relatively stable across different societies (Wolfgang, 1969). In regard to female homicide rates, Wolfgang found the average age of the female homicide offender to normally be higher than the average age of male homicide offenders. Some of the other variables that Wolfgang studied were race, level of intelligence, marital status and prior criminal record of the offenders. As in previous studies, little specific information on the female offender was given. He concluded that the female homicide offender was probably black and married. Other findings were only for the homicide offenders in general and not addressed specifically to the female.

The study done by Mulvihill and Tumin (1969) does describe the "typical" violent female offender. Their profile included the following description: Women committed to prison for homicide were 65 percent white, 25 percent black, and 10 percent Mexican; tended to be of average to below average intelligence; came from families in which there was no reported criminality; came from unbroken homes (two-thirds); were reported to have been sexually promiscuous or prostitutes (6 out of 10); had serious drinking problems; had virtually no reports of narcotics use; were diagnosed as having some type of psychological disability (over 80 percent of these women had limited criminal careers ...). Compared to other

offender categories, homicide offenders had: the least reported family criminality; the lowest known incidence of illegal sexual conduct; the least extensive prior criminal record; been arrested later in life; the largest proportion of alcoholics; the smallest proportion of known narcotics use; the highest percentage of evidencing psychosis.

The study also showed that the commission of homicide usually involved: the woman as sole perpetrator; children and husbands or lovers as victims (over 50 percent); premeditation in only one in five cases; limited use of physical strength because victims were either helpless (small children) or in some way incapacitated (drunk, asleep, ill); the use of a gun (one-third) and knives or other household implements (one-third). This profile gives a very good idea from which one can view the typical female homicide offender.

Books are the second form of material available which describes the violent female offender and are not quite the same as the studies previously mentioned. Within these books, the female violent offender is cast as a plotting, seductive, brutal murderess who is out to either get money or revenge. The books would be classified by this researcher as falling somewhere between fiction and empirical research. Until recently, the majority of material purporting to describe the female murderess was of this type.

The book, Crime of Passion (1958) written by Derick Goodman provides some insight into this form of literature. He describes



eight different murders and how they occurred. A portion of his introductory paragraph of the first murder is indicative of how the entire book reads:

It was the morning of March the 17th, 1955. It was still cold for the time of year but the morning sunlight was a mute promise to Parisians, that Spring was on its way. Spring, when a young man's fancy turns lightly to thoughts of love. In ten day's time, Bernard Mougeot was thinking, Felix Bailly, his best friend, was going to marry the girl of his choice, Monique Lombark, young, blonde, beautiful, a perfect match for the gifted young medical student, ...

Another writer who provides an excellent example of this form of "research" is Leonard Gribble. His book, Such Women Are Deadly (1969), describes twelve cases of murder by females. His premise in writing the book was to show "that the female of the species is more deadly than the male." His descriptions of why the women murder, supposedly based on fact, do not contribute much to the understanding of the category of women who are violence prone.

Other authors portray women who murder in much the same way. The material contained in such books does not speak of measurable factors which could be generalized to a larger population. Yet, perhaps these books do describe how the female offender has historically been viewed by the large percentage of writers. This treatment may explain, in part, why additional work has not been done until recently on the female offender and specifically the violent-prone female.

#### Current Thoughts on Female Offenders

The previous review of the literature has shown how the study

of woman's criminality has evolved and some of the writings on the violent-prone female. In an attempt to show where current emphasis is, it can be said, much of the concentration is to explain why female crime is on the increase. There are at least two explanations for the increase. Two researchers, Freda Adler, in her book Sisters in Crime (1975), and Rita Simon, in her book Women and Crime (1975), present the two explanations for the increased criminality of women. Both authors agree on at least some major points: One, that the dominant trend in women's crime is toward property and "white-collar" offenses, notably burglary, robbery, larceny, embezzlement, and fraud; second, the crime rate for both women and men is relative to opportunity rather than differences in morality (The Christian Science Monitor, August 6, 1975).

Adler explains the increased criminality in women from a "liberation" standpoint. She maintains that the social revolution by women in the 1960's caused a "masculinization" of female social and criminal behavior, which subsequently, led to an increase in the frequency and variety of their conduct (1975). She further suggests that women's involvement in crime has existed throughout recorded history but their presence, as in many legitimate activities, has been overlooked. Her basic assumption is best summarized by this excerpt from her book:

When we did not permit women to swim at the beaches, the female drowning rate was quite low. When women were not permitted to work as bank tellers or bank presidents, the embezzlement rate was low. Now it turns out that--low and behold--women are people, just as honest or dishonest as

other people, and just as prone to yield to temptation. What is more, when women are subjected to the same stresses and strains, the same aggressive life styles that men had been under traditionally, we find that not only do heart attacks increase among women, but also criminality, demonstrative of stress and aggression [p. 57].

Because of the "liberation" of the female gender, Adler maintains that thousands of women are stepping across the imaginary boundary which once separated crimes into "masculine," i.e., homicide, armed robbery, aggravated assault, etc., and "feminine," i.e., prostitution, shoplifting, etc. As a result of this "newly acquired freedom," the female criminal has begun to fight for her place in the world of crime, and like her legitimate-based counterpart, knows "too much to pretend, or return to her former role as a second-rate criminal confined to 'feminine' crimes" [Adler, 1975].

A different explanation of women's increased criminality is put forth by Rita Simon. She sees the increase as opportunity-- i.e., she contends that the number of women in the labor market has had more to do with criminality than the women's movement. As those opportunities become more plentiful, women's participation in larceny, fraud, embezzlement, and other financial and white-collar crime increases. And, on the other hand, as women enter the labor force in greater proportions, as they acquire more skills through educational and occupational training, and as they receive more generous financial compensation, their sense of frustration, their feelings of being victimized, and their sense of powerlessness diminishes (Simon, 1976).

Simon puts forth another explanation, which Adler probably



concurs with, for the increased crime rates for women. Simon points to the diminishing "chivalry" factor of the Criminal Justice System as another reason for the increased reported criminality among women. Whether this is a reflection of acknowledging the feminist influence in fighting for equality on all fronts, or the acceptance on behalf of the Criminal Justice System that too much crime is being committed by females and it must be controlled, is a matter for debate from both authors and their supporters.

These two authors represent the crux of the current emphasis on female criminals today. The impact of the work done throughout history has served to awaken anew the interest in the female criminal, principally out of the need to hopefully find solutions to the increased criminality of women. Both Adler and Simon see the solution to the increased female criminality as coming after understanding the factors which may cause some women to become criminal. The ultimate reason is most probably complex--the solution will come only after additional study and analysis of the findings. In order to expand one area, the violent female, this paper will describe the violent-prone female who committed murder.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

This study presents a description of the "typical" female murderess confined in the Goree Unit of the Texas Department of Corrections in February, 1978. To develop this descriptive model of the violent-prone female, twenty-seven variables were used. These variables were divided into the six major categories used by the Texas Department of Corrections for the classification of inmates. These categories are: (1) demographic characteristics, (2) social characteristics, (3) prior criminal behavior, (4) education and intelligence, (5) institutional information, and (6) current offense information.

The information for these twenty-seven variables was gathered from the records office of the Texas Department of Corrections located in Huntsville, Texas. A listing of the twenty-seven variables is contained in Table 1. From the analysis of these variables, a description of the "typical" female murderess currently incarcerated in Texas will be made.

#### Sample Selection

The population consists of seventy-three females convicted of homicide who are currently in the Texas Department of Corrections. They represent the entire population convicted of the crime of murder who are presently held at the Goree Unit of the Texas Department of Corrections. All females convicted of murder were not studied, since

TABLE 1  
Listing of Study Variables by Category

Category	Variables
Demographic Characteristics	Race County of Nativity County of Residence Age at Time of Conviction
Social Characteristics	Inmate's Marital Status Religious Preference Military Record Type of Discharge State Hospital Confinements
Prior Criminal Behavior	Number of Times in Jail Number of Times in Reform School Number of Times in Detention Homes Number of Times in Other Prisons Number of Times in TDC Number of Suspended Sentences Number of Times on Probation Number of Parole Violations
Education and Intelligence	Educational Achievement Level Intelligence Quotient
Institutional Information	Segregative Classification Security Classification Medical Classification
Current Offense Information	Present Detainers County of Conviction Present Crime Sentence Number of Co-defendants

it was felt that the one unit housed a representative sample. This feeling was confirmed by the warden of the Goree Unit, who stated that an almost equal number of inmates were at the Mountain View

Unit, with the exception that Goree handled some who were in need of medical care.

The sample population was identified by using only those who had an actual conviction of murder on their records--not necessarily for this conviction. Other inmates who had possibly murdered someone and later plea bargained to a lesser charge were not included since it was impossible to identify those inmates from the available information contained in the records office of the Texas Department of Corrections.

#### Agency Setting

The data for this study were obtained by reviewing the records at the Central Records Office of the Texas Department of Corrections. The information contained in the records was compiled by checking local, state and federal police files, with additional personal history data being obtained from the inmate, her family, and her local community. The test scores for educational achievement and intelligence levels were obtained from tests given each inmate upon entering the Texas prison system. Normally, this testing takes place within the first few weeks of confinement.

#### Definition of Terms

The following terms were used in this study. They are defined here to aid the reader in understanding the terms connected with this study and to provide clarity when looking at the results

and findings.

Criminal Homicide--A person knowingly commits criminal homicide if he intentionally, knowingly, recklessly, or with criminal negligence causes the death of an individual.

Criminal homicide is murder, capital murder, voluntary manslaughter, involuntary manslaughter, or criminally negligent homicide.

Degrees of murder in Texas no longer exist. A person is chargeable with the intent with which he acted and the intended consequences of his act. If he shoots at one person with malice and kills a bystander or third person, he is guilty of murder with malice. If he does not act with malice afterthought under such circumstances, then he is guilty of murder without malice [Texas Annotated Penal Statutes, 1974 with current changes]

Offender Classification--The Classification Committee, as soon as practicable, shall classify all prisoners according to their industry, conduct, and obedience in three (3) classifications: Class I, Class II and Class III, which may be changed by the Classification Committee at any time and from time to time as in their opinion the circumstances may require [Article 6184, V.C.S.].

All inmates received at the prison are placed in one of the following offender classifications:

I. First Offenders	17-21 years of age
IA. First Offenders	22-25 years of age
IB. First Offenders	Over 25 years of age
II. Recidivists	17-21 years of age
IIA. Recidivists	22-25 years of age
IIB. Recidivists	Over 25 years of age
IIC. Habituals	Over 25 years of age
III. High Security Risks	

Assignments of inmates to specific units is generally determined by the Classification Committee in terms of offender classification.

Physical Evaluation and Classification--A comprehensive physical evaluation is made by the Medical Director of the Texas Department of Corrections. Each inmate is placed in a medical class commensurate with his/her physical capabilities to perform labor. The Medical Director shall have the final authority over medical classification of all inmates.

Class I--Unrestricted Work. This group generally is composed of men under 40 years of age who have no disease or physical defect which prevents their assignment of any work.

Class II--Restricted Work. This group generally includes men



between 40 and 50 years old, youth (17 years of age or younger), small men (120 pounds or less), and inmates who are obese. Men who have mild structural defects which cause slight impairment, men with old fractures or other injuries which have healed, and men with mild degrees of myopia (near-sightedness) are placed in this group if the condition will not be aggravated by work. Also, poorly developed men are sometimes placed in this classification.

Class III--Light Work with Men of Like Class. This group generally includes men in their early fifties who are in good condition and have no significant physical abnormalities. Younger men who have some physical defects which limit appreciably their ability to do farm work, the condition not being aggravated by that work, are in this group. Men with a high degree of myopia, correctable with glasses; men with a history of epilepsy, but whose seizures are infrequent and whose epilepsy is being well-controlled with anticonvulsant drugs; men with a history of tuberculosis which has been inactive for at least five years; men with history of and infrequent attacks of asthma; and men with mild arthritic problems.

Class IV--Light Work--No Line Assignment. This group generally includes men past 60 years of age and younger men who have physical abnormalities which, in the opinion of the examining physician, make them unfit for field work. This would include men who have lost an arm, a leg, or three or more fingers; men who are suffering from deafness of severe impairment of vision; men with atrophy of one or more of the extremities; men with severe hypertension, heart disorders, severe epilepsy, and/or any other diseases which make them unsuitable for farm labor.

Class V--Huntsville Unit. This group generally includes all seriously ill men. Those who regularly require medical attention which cannot be provided on other units [Art. 6166x, V.C.S.].

Illiterate--ignorant; uneducated; especially unable to read or write [Webster's New World Dictionary, 1962].

Educational Achievement Level--When used in the context of this study, the term refers to the level of educational achievement that the inmate scored on the California Educational Achievement Test used by the Texas Department of Corrections.

Intelligence Quotient--When used in the context of this study, the term refers to the score given after taking the Revised Beta IQ Test used by the Texas Department of Corrections to ascertain the intelligence level of the inmates. This score is used to aid in plotting a program for the inmate while in

prison.

Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area--Refers to the areas designated by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget after meeting certain federal government criteria that are characteristic of the nation's urban centers and the suburban clusters that form around those core cities. Within Texas, there are twenty-five federally designated metropolitan areas, more than any other state in the nation.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The data collected for this study were analyzed in an effort to present a descriptive profile of the females convicted of homicide who are presently confined in the Goree Unit of the Texas Department of Corrections. In an attempt to present these data and findings into a simple format, each variable was classified according to one of the following categories: (1) demographic characteristics, (2) social characteristics, (3) prior criminal behavior, (4) educational and intelligence information, (5) current offense information, and (6) institutional information.

#### Demographic Characteristics

When looking at demographic characteristics of persons, a researcher attempts to locate social intercorrelations between the study variables. In this study, certain demographic characteristics are described. They are the racial composition of the inmates, their age at time of conviction, the county of legal residence, and county of nativity of the inmates studied. These categories are also linked very closely to the social characteristics of the inmates by being very similar in describing the interrelations of the inmates.

#### Racial Composition

Data gathered during this study concerning racial distribution

showed that 49 percent of the inmates were white, 40 percent were black, and 11 percent were Mexican-American, as presented in Table 2. The overall female population in the Texas Department of Corrections, as of December 31, 1976, was composed of 35.14 percent white, 53.02 percent black, and 11.84 percent Mexican-American. It would appear that the white females may be over-represented in the category of the crime of murder.

TABLE 2  
Racial Frequency Distribution

Race	Number of Inmates	Per Cent of Inmates
White	36	49
Black	29	40
Mexican-American	8	11
Total	73	100

#### Inmate Age at Conviction

Table 3 presents the age frequency distribution of the inmates included in this study at the time of conviction. These inmates ranged in age from eighteen to fifty-eight years. Over 39 percent of the inmates were twenty-five years old and younger, 32 percent of the inmates were between twenty-six to thirty-six years of age, with the remaining 28 percent of the inmates being over thirty-six years of age. The mean age of the female in this

study who committed homicide was 27.5 years old.

TABLE 3

## Age Frequency Distribution at Time of Conviction

Age	Number of Inmates	Per Cent of Inmates
18	2	2.7
19	2	2.7
20	5	6.8
21	4	5.5
22	3	4.1
23	4	5.5
24	3	4.1
25	6	8.2
26	5	6.8
27	2	2.7
28	3	4.1
29	1	1.4
30	2	2.7
31	2	2.7
32	2	2.7
33	3	4.1
34	1	1.4
35	1	1.4
36	2	2.7
37	2	2.7
39	3	4.1
40	1	1.4
43	1	1.4
44	3	4.1
45	1	1.4
47	1	1.4
49	1	1.4
51	1	1.4
52	1	1.4
53	1	1.4
54	2	2.7
55	1	1.4
58	1	1.4
Total	73	100.0



County of Nativity

Table 4 presents the county of nativity. Here it was found that 38.3 percent of the inmates came from a standard metropolitan statistical area, 28.8 percent came from rural areas of Texas, and 32.9 percent were born out of state.

TABLE 4

## County of Nativity

County	Number of Inmates	Per Cent of Inmates
Austin	1	1.4
Bastrop	1	1.4
Bee	1	1.4
Bexar	1	1.4
Brazoria	1	1.4
Cameron	2	2.7
Castro	1	1.4
Chambers	1	1.4
Dallas	4	5.5
Delta	1	1.4
Fayette	1	1.4
Gonzales	2	2.7
Harris	10	13.7
Jasper	1	1.4
Jefferson	5	6.8
Lynn	1	1.4
Maverick	1	1.4
Nueces	1	1.4
Panola	1	1.4
Rusk	1	1.4
Sabine	1	1.4
Scurry	1	1.4
Shackelford	1	1.4
Tarrant	1	1.4
Travis	1	1.4
Trinity	1	1.4
Val Verde	1	1.4
Waller	2	2.7
Wharton	2	2.7
Out of State	24	32.9
Total	73	100.5

County of Legal Residence

Table 5 presents the county of legal residence at time of conviction. Analyzing this table, one sees that 80.1 percent of the inmates convicted resided in a standard metropolitan statistical area, 15.1 percent in a rural area of Texas, and 4.1 percent were from out of state.

TABLE 5  
*County of Residence*

County	Number of Inmates	Per Cent of Inmates
Aransas	1	1.4
Austin	1	1.4
Bexar	1	1.4
Brazoria	1	1.4
Cameron	1	1.4
Dallas	5	6.8
Galveston	4	5.5
Gonzales	1	1.4
Gregg	1	1.4
Harris	27	37.0
Hunt	1	1.4
Jasper	1	1.4
Jefferson	5	6.8
Liberty	2	2.7
Lubbock	2	2.7
Matagorda	1	1.4
Nueces	1	1.4
Orange	2	2.7
Panda	1	1.4
Potter	1	1.4
Smith	1	1.4
Tarrant	2	2.7
Travis	1	1.4
Trinity	1	1.4
Val Verde	1	1.4
Victoria	1	1.4
Walker	1	1.4
Wichita	2	2.7
Out of State	3	4.1
Total	73	100.4

### Social Characteristics

As stated previously, this category is very similar to demographic characteristics. In sociological research, both are examined to find and isolate possible intercorrelations between persons and groups. Within this category are described the inmates' marital status, their religious affiliations, their past military record, and their mental stability in relation to the number of prior confinements in mental institutions.

#### Inmates' Marital Status

The inmates' marital status at time of confinement is presented in Table 6. When analyzing the data on marital status, it was found that 80.8 percent of the women claimed to have been married at one time or another, while only 19.2 percent of the women claimed to have been single. The 12.3 percent of the inmates who were widows include those who were convicted of murdering their husbands. Of the 46.6 percent inmates claiming to still be married, about 30 percent of that figure were common-law marriages.

TABLE 6

#### Inmates' Marital Status

Marital Status	Number of Inmates	Per Cent of Inmates
Single	14	19.2
Married	34	46.6
Divorced	11	15.1
Separated	5	6.8
Widowed	9	12.3
Total	73	100.0

### Religious Affiliations

Table 7 presents the religious affiliations of the inmates studied. The data showed that fifty-three of the inmates, 72.6 percent of the overall population, either claimed to be of the Baptist or Catholic faith. This follows the state trend where the two largest religious affiliations are the Baptist or Catholic. Only four of the inmates studied claimed no religious affiliations.

TABLE 7  
Religious Affiliation Frequency Distribution

Religious Affiliation	Number of Inmates	Per Cent of Inmates
Baptist	36	49.3
Catholic	17	23.3
Methodist	7	9.6
Church of Christ	5	6.8
Penacostal	2	2.7
Holiness	1	1.4
Bahai	1	1.4
None	4	5.5
Total	73	100.0

### Military Record and Discharge

Only one of the inmates studied had prior military service. She served in the Army and received a Medical Discharge under Honorable Conditions. As the Armed Services increase the number of women recruited to serve, it would be expected that the number

of women who may come to prison after serving in the military will increase over the next few years.

#### Prior Confinements in Mental Hospitals

Table 8 shows the prior confinements in state mental hospitals. Twenty-one of the inmates have been confined at least once, with one inmate having been confined five times. The twenty-one inmates represent 28.8 percent of the total population studied. This is a seemingly large percentage, especially in light of the data which showed most of the commitments being self-commitments.

TABLE 8  
Mental Hospital Confinements

Number of Confinements	Number of Inmates	Per Cent of Inmates
1	11	15.1
2	5	6.8
3	3	4.1
4	1	1.4
5	1	1.4
None	52	71.2
Total	73	100.0

#### Prior Criminal Behavior

Prior criminal behavior is defined as the information of record and documented confinements and sentences on record at the Texas Department of Corrections. By describing these character-



istics, a possible pattern could be found which could explain the actions which resulted in their criminal action. Covered in this category is the prior criminal behavior of the inmates studied, from the number of their prior confinements to the number of suspended sentences and parole violations.

#### Jail Confinements

Table 9 presents the frequency of jail confinements prior to the present conviction. From the data, it was found that fifty-nine (80.8%) of the inmates had never been confined in jail. Of the remaining fourteen (19.2%) of the inmates, their jail confinements ranged from one to seven confinements. It was concluded that many of the inmates in this study had little or no contact with law enforcement agencies prior to their present crime.

TABLE 9  
Frequency of Prior Confinements in Jail

Number of Confinements	Number of Inmates	Per Cent of Inmates
1	8	11.0
2	1	1.4
4	2	2.7
5	2	2.7
7	1	1.4
None	59	80.8
Total	73	100.0

#### Reformatory Confinements

It was found that only four (5.4%) of the inmates had reform school confinements. Of these, none had been sent to reform school more than once. It was concluded from these findings that the vast majority of the inmates had their first encounter with the law after their juvenile years. If Texas follows the national trend, which is for more and more juveniles to be arrested, this area will be expected to change in the coming years.

#### Confinements in Detention Homes

It was found that only six (8.2%) of the inmates in the study group had previously been confined in detention homes. Of those six inmates, only the one inmate who had nine detention home confinements had also been confined in reform school.

#### Confinements in Military Prisons

As previously discussed, there was only one female studied who had prior military service. She had not served any time in a military prison and was discharged for medical reasons.

#### Confinements in Other Prisons

None of the inmates in the study had ever been incarcerated in other prisons. With the increased involvement of women in crime, not specifically murder, this could change in the coming years if the Criminal Justice System begins to sentence females equally as their male counterparts.

### Prior Confinements in the Texas Department of Corrections

Only six inmates of the study group had previously been confined in the Texas Department of Corrections. Five of these had previously been confined once and one inmate had two prior confinements. They represent only 8.2 percent of the population studied.

### Summary of Confinements

Table 10 presents the overall number of prior confinements of the seventy-three inmates studied. It should be remembered that the majority of the inmates studied are first offenders with no prior confinements. The rest of the table has been discussed earlier; therefore, this table is just a summary.

TABLE 10  
Summary of Confinements

Prior Confinements	Number of Inmates Having Prior Confinements	Per Cent of Inmates
Detention Homes	6	8.2
Jails	14	19.2
Reformatories	4	5.4
Other Prisons	0	0
Texas Department of Corrections	6	8.2

### Suspended Sentences

Of the seventy-three inmates studied, none had ever received a suspended sentence. This tends to reinforce the conclusion that

for most inmates studied, this was their first encounter with the Criminal Justice System.

#### Probated Sentences

Twenty (27.4%) of the inmates studied had received probated sentences previously. For seventeen of the inmates, it was their first probated sentence, while two inmates had received two probated sentences, and one inmate had received three probated sentences. This includes sentences received at state and federal level while either as a juvenile or as an adult.

#### Parole Violations

Of the seventy-three inmates studied, only three (8.2%) had previous parole violations. In respect to the number of inmates previously confined in prison, this figure seems out of proportion since of the six inmates with previous prison confinements, only two inmates had parole violations in their files with the other parole violation unaccounted for.

#### Education and Intelligence

Both the education achievement level and intelligence quotient of the inmates are used as a guide not only to help prepare the best possible prison program for the inmate and for classification purposes, but also to compare their level of scores to other inmates and to the general population of the "free world." Possibly, these factors could contribute to identifying deviant personalities.

### Educational Achievement

Table 11 presents the educational achievement level in years and months as used by the Texas Department of Corrections for classification purposes. The scores are arrived at from tests given the incoming inmates and not based on the actual educational level that the inmate may have attained. From the data, it was found that one inmate was illiterate and had never attended any school, thirteen women had achieved the level of grade school, twenty-nine women had progressed through junior high, one woman had attained the twelve grade level, and no scores were recorded for twenty-nine of the inmates. The mean score for the inmates having scores was between six years zero months, and six years nine months.

### Intelligence Quotient

Table 12 presents the intelligence quotient of the seventy-three inmates studied. No scores were available on thirty-nine of the inmates. Of those available, the mean was between 100-109, with the lowest recorded score between 60-69, and the highest score between 120-129. This compares to the mean score of all female inmates in the Texas Department of Corrections as of December 31, 1976, which was 94.78. These scores were compiled from tests given to each inmate during initial processing at the Texas Department of Corrections. Overall, the study group of inmates had slightly higher scores than the general female prison population.



TABLE 11  
Educational Achievement of Inmates

Educational Achievement in Months and Years	Number of Inmates	Per Cent of Inmates
Illiterate	1	1.4
3 years 0 months	2	2.7
3 years 9 months		
4 years 0 months	3	4.1
4 years 9 months		
5 years 0 months	8	11.0
5 years 9 months		
6 years 0 months	14	19.1
6 years 9 months		
7 years 0 months	8	11.0
7 years 9 months		
8 years 0 months	3	4.1
8 years 9 months		
9 years 0 months	4	5.5
9 years 9 months		
12 years 0 months	1	1.4
12 years 9 months		
No scores available	29	39.7
Total	73	100.0

TABLE 12  
Present Intelligence Quotient

Test Scores	Number of Inmates	Per Cent of Inmates
60-69	2	2.7
70-79	3	4.1
80-89	2	2.7
90-99	7	9.6
100-109	13	17.8
110-119	6	8.2
120-129	1	1.4
No Scores Available	39	53.4
Total	73	99.9

Current Offense Information

The data described within this category identify the current crime of which the subjects were convicted of committing. The variables described in this category are the number of outstanding detainers against the inmates, the county of conviction, the present sentence received by the inmate upon conviction, the crime for which the woman was convicted, and how many co-defendants the female may have had when committing the crime.

Number of Detainers

There were no present detainers existing on any of the

seventy-three inmates studied. This is probably due to the ability of the inmate, at the present time, to force the court by using the Interstate Agreement on Detainers, to either process the detainer within 180 days or else drop the detainer. This was set up to help the inmate prepare for his/her future

#### County of Conviction

Table 13 presents the county of conviction for the seventy-three inmates studied. Here, it was found that sixty (82.2%) of the inmates were convicted in one of the standard metropolitan statistical areas of Texas. This follows the trend for all crimes to be moving from the rural to urban areas.

#### Present Sentence

Table 14 presents the length of sentence imposed on the seventy-three inmates studied. The length of sentence varied from four years to life for the crime of murder, with the mean sentence being twenty-two years. This compares with 13.02 years being the mean sentence for all female inmates in the Texas Department of Corrections as of December 31, 1976. Another interesting feature is that seventeen (23.3%) of the inmates received either ninety-nine years or life as their punishment.

#### Present Crime

Table 15 presents what crime the women were convicted of according to the records at the Texas Department of Corrections. While two women were convicted of capital murder, neither had been

TABLE 13  
County of Conviction

County	Number of Inmates	Per Cent of Inmates
Austin	1	1.4
Bexar	1	1.4
Bowie	1	1.4
Brazoria	1	1.4
Cameron	1	1.4
Dallas	7	9.6
Galveston	5	6.8
Gonzales	1	1.4
Gregg	1	1.4
Harris	23	31.5
Harrison	1	1.4
Hunt	1	1.4
Jefferson	6	8.2
Liberty	2	2.7
Lubbock	2	2.7
Matagorda	1	1.4
Medina	1	1.4
Nueces	1	1.4
Orange	1	1.4
Panola	1	1.4
Polk	1	1.4
Potter	1	1.4
Reeves	1	1.4
San Patricio	1	1.4
Tarrant	2	2.7
Travis	1	1.4
Uvalde	1	1.4
Val Verde	1	1.4
Victoria	1	1.4
Walker	1	1.4
Wichita	2	2.7
Total	73	99.1

TABLE 14  
Current Sentence

Sentence in Years	Number of Inmates	Per Cent of Inmates
4	1	1.4
5	7	9.6
7	1	1.4
8	1	1.4
10	4	5.5
13	1	1.4
15	12	16.4
18	2	2.7
20	6	8.2
22	1	1.4
25	2	2.7
26	1	1.4
27	1	1.4
30	5	6.8
35	1	1.4
40	1	1.4
41	1	1.4
50	6	8.2
60	1	1.4
75	1	1.4
99	5	4.1
Life	14	19.2
Total	73	100.2



TABLE 15  
Present Crime

Crime	Number of Inmates	Per Cent of Inmates
Attempted Murder	1	1.4
Murder	53	72.6
Murder with Malice	15	20.5
Capital Murder	2	2.7
Conspiracy to Commit Murder	1	1.4
Murder 1st Degree	1	1.4
Total	73	100.0

sentenced to death which could happen in Texas. Fifty-three (73.6) of the inmates had been convicted of murder, and fifteen (20.5%) of the inmates had been convicted of murder with malice, which represents 94.1 percent of the total population studied. The remaining 5.9 percent of the inmates were convicted of the crimes as shown in the table.

#### Co-defendants

Of the inmates studied, twenty-four (32.8%) of them had co-defendants as shown in Table 16. Thirteen inmates had one co-defendant,

eight inmates had two co-defendants, two inmates had three co-defendants, and one inmate had four co-defendants. The remaining forty-nine inmates acted alone in their crime. The data showed that most of the co-defendants were males; however, it did not indicate which inmate had planned the crime.

TABLE 16  
Number of Co-Defendants

Number of Co-defendants	Number of Inmates	Per Cent of Inmates
1	13	54.1
2	8	33.3
3	2	8.3
4	1	1.4
Total	24	99.8

#### Institutional Information

The institutional information data describes how the inmates convicted of murder were classified by the Texas Department of Corrections. It describes the security rating of the inmates, their current segregative classification, and their medical classification. These data could be used to compare to other inmates in prison and see if there are differences between the violent-prone female and general female prison population.

### Security Rating

The security rating, for the most part, has been dropped by the Texas Department of Corrections because of the nature of the prison system. However, it was noted in the records reviewed for this study that fourteen women had notations recommending that they be under maximum security because of their mental condition or nature of their crime.

### Current Segregative Classification

Table 17 presents the inmates' segregative classification. As seen, sixty-four (87.7%) of the inmates were classified as first offenders, nine (12.3%) of the inmates were recidivists, and none were classified as habitual.

### Medical Classification

Table 18 presents the medical classification of the inmates studied. It was found that forty-five inmates (61.6%) were classified as Class I, under forty years of age and having no disease or physical defect; four inmates (5.5%) were classified as Class II, between forty to fifty years of age with mild structural defects; eight inmates (11.0%) were Class III, in their early fifties without any physical abnormalities; three women (4.1%) were classified as Class IV, past sixty years of age and younger persons with physical abnormalities; seven women (9.6%) were classified as Class V, generally seriously ill person requiring medical attention; and seven inmates (9.6%) had no recorded medical classification in their records.

TABLE 17  
Current Segregative Classification

Classification	Number of Inmates	Per Cent of Inmates
First Offender I Age 17-21	14	19.2
First Offender IA Age 22-25	12	16.4
First Offender IB Age 26-Over	38	52.1
Recidivist II Age 17-21	0	0
Recidivist IIA Age 22-25	3	4.1
Recidivist IIB Age 26-Over	6	8.2
Habitual Age 26-Over	0	0
Total	73	100.0

TABLE 18  
Medical Classification

Medical Classification	Number of Inmates	Per Cent of Inmates
Class I	45	61.6
Class II	4	5.5
Class III	8	11.0
Class IV	3	4.1
Class V	6	8.2
Unknown	7	9.6
Total	73	100.0



## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to develop a comprehensive description of the characteristics of the females convicted of murder who are currently confined in the Goree Unit of the Texas Department of Corrections, during February, 1978. The seventy-three subjects' records were analyzed by examining twenty-seven variables which were divided into six major categories. The major categories were: (1) demographic characteristics, (2) social characteristics, (3) prior criminal behavior, (4) current offense information, (5) education and intelligence scores, and (6) institutional information. After analyzing the material gathered into the major categories, a descriptive analysis of the female murderess in Texas was developed. The results section of this study provides the basis for describing the typical murderess incarcerated at the Texas Department of Corrections.

When describing this typical murderess, it was found that she was a white female who was 27.5 years of age when convicted. She had almost an equal chance of being born in either a standard metropolitan statistical area or a rural area or out of state. She was residing in and convicted in a standard metropolitan statistical area of Texas, with a good chance that it was Harris, Jefferson, or Dallas counties. She most likely had at some time been married. Her religious affiliation was most probably with the Baptist denomination, as with the majority of inmates, since it also is the largest

denomination in Texas. This typical inmate had not served in the Armed Forces of the United States. Her mental condition would generally be considered stable, although approximately 25 percent of all subjects studied had been in mental institutions. The reason for the commitment was probably related to either drug use or alcohol. The typical subject, in regard to her past criminal history, had probably never before been in jail, reform school, detention homes, prison, or placed on probation. However, if she had a prior criminal record, she most likely would have been on probation rather than any of the other prior criminal behavior variables. In relation to educational achievement tests and intelligence tests, it was found that she had not completed junior high school, but she had a slightly higher intelligence score when compared to the other inmates in prison. For the commission of present crime, it was found that the mean sentence was approximately twenty-two years upon conviction for the crime of murder. She, more than likely, acted alone in the commission of the crime and presently does not have any outstanding detainers against her. The Texas Department of Corrections has classified the "typical" violent female as a first offender, and also as a first class medical inmate.

It should be remembered that this description would not fit any particular inmate currently held in the Texas Department of Corrections. The above typology represents only a description of the typical murderess as formulated by reviewing the data gathered for the different variables and when analyzed within the context of

the six major categories of this study.

#### Conclusions and Recommendations

In conclusion, the results of this study describes the typical female murderess in the Texas Department of Corrections. In attempting to tie this study to other works in the area on female offenders, it was found that the results tend to support the 1950 findings of Otto Pollak in The Criminality of Women, specifically in the following areas: (1) age--that women tend to become criminal at a later age than men; (2) intelligence--that female offenders are at least of average intelligence; and (3) marital status--that most female offenders are married. It differs from Pollak's findings and from the Uniform Crime Report for 1976 in the area of racial composition of female offenders incarcerated for the crime of murder. In this study, it was found that the majority of the women were white rather than black. This racial composition, however, does not carry throughout the entire female prisoner population where the blacks represent the largest racial group.

This study does not support the public conception of the typical murderess. The subjects were not found to be of low intelligence nor to have a past criminal history which could predispose this person to commit additional crimes. The study also does not give credence to an earlier writing on the female murderess as being a woman who had fallen from grace or been led astray by love or greed. Most of the written interviews found in the records of the

subjects studied, did not indicate that the crime was planned but rather that it happened seemingly on the spur of the moment. The typical inmate did not show a past history for lesser offenses which could lead to her violent nature. The sensational aspects of the criminal act, which seem to prompt earlier writings on women who murder, would not be found among the typical inmate studied.

It is felt that this study can be useful as a guide for future research in the area dealing with the female offender. Hopefully, it also adds to the information available on this class of inmate from which additional work may be done. Particular emphasis should be devoted to the areas of demographic characteristics, social characteristics, and intelligence scores. These areas pointed out how the class of inmates studied seem to differ from the general prison population.

It is also felt that within the overall study, some questions are raised which should be further addressed. Several of these questions are:

1. Why does the typical murderess have a higher intelligence score than the average inmate?
2. Is Texas unique in having the county of nativity almost evenly split between urban, rural, and out of state?
3. As women increase their numbers in the military services, will they increase in violent crimes? If so, why?
4. What are the economic classes of the women who commit murder? Does it affect how they are accepted when released?

5. Is the relatively larger percentage of women who have previous mental institution care important?

Hopefully, this study can serve as a starting point to answer some of the above questions. It is also recommended that studies of this nature be replicated for other states to determine if Texas represents a valid description of the violent female for the entire country.



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APPENDIX



## APPENDIX

### Listing of Study Variables by Category

#### Demographic Characteristics

1. Race
2. County of Nativity
3. County of Residence
4. Age at Time of Conviction

#### Social Characteristics

5. Inmates' Marital Status
6. Religious Preference
7. Military Record
8. Type of Discharge
9. State Hospital Confinements

#### Prior Criminal Behavior

10. Number of Times in Jail,
11. Number of Times in Reform School
12. Number of Times in Detention Homes
13. Number of Times in Other Prisons
14. Number of Times in TDC
15. Number of Suspended Sentences
16. Number of Times on Probation
17. Number of Parole Violations

#### Education and Intelligence

18. Education Achievement Level

## APPENDIX--Continued

19. Intelligence Quotient

Institutional Information

20. Segregative Classification

21. Security Classification

22. Medical Classification

Current Offense Information

23. Present Detainers

24. County of Conviction

25. Present Crime

26. Sentence

27. Number of Co-defendants

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